



ALBERTA HORTICULTURAL ASSOCIATION

February

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Cover Photo by Theresa Zerr

Fall Greetings from the Judging Committee

It has been a busy summer for everyone, I'm sure. The gardening season draws to a close and with that the end to the 2024 bench show season.

2024 was a busy year for bench show committees and the Alberta Horticultural Association judges who were asked to judge the horticultural exhibits. In 2023 there were 23 shows that requested A.H.A. judges, and in 2024 there were 29 shows that requested A.H.A. judges. Very exciting to see an increase in the requests.

In the past two years we have added to our pool of judges but also understand that some members have retired from the judging program. This is an opportunity to welcome the new apprentices and the new judges to the A.H.A. judging program.

A huge note of gratitude to those who have judged through the A.H.A. judging program. As we move forward to 2025 we are looking to host a judging workshop at a club request - some plans are already in the works. One of the goals of the judging committee is to assist bench show committees, exhibitors and judges with the bench show experience.

Show committees, exhibitors and judges occasionally send the judging committee their comments and concerns. This information helps the judging committee provide information to others and improve the program, thank you to those who send me their comments.



Priddis & Millarville Fair 2024: Vegetable Entries

Photo submitted by Lorraine Cathro



Camrose Rose & Lily Show: AHA Judge, Marie Wenger, works through the tables of entries.

Photo submitted by Janine Carroll



Darwell & District Ag Fair: Junior Vegetable Entries 12 Years and under

Photo submitted by Michele Stanley

Judging Committee Tidbits

*Clubs can request to have an A.H.A. judge speak at an affiliate meeting. Questions and Answers about terminology and definitions, expectations of the exhibitors.

*Request A.H.A judges so there is consistency in the judging.

* Show Committees, exhibitors and judges should all be familiar with the book Judging Standards for Horticultural Bench Shows.

Everyone working with the same information is Key. The judging standards book is only available on line at the present time.

* Membership in the A.H.A. is for one calendar year. Membership forms are available on line or from your district representative and will be sent out with the November Newsletter.

* Show report forms and Judges forms are also available on line or from the judging committee.



Priddis & Millarville Fair
Photo submitted by Lorraine Cathro

Marie and I are looking forward to 2025 and assisting in any way we can. The sooner we know when the shows are scheduled for we can get information on line and into the A.H.A. newsletters. Wishing you all the best as you prepare for 2025.

Karen - Judging Committee

Marie Wenger - Judging Committee



Claresholm & District Fair:
Potted Plants, Class 3
Cactus or Succulent
Photo submitted by Rita Erven

* We are working on a quick guide for show committees, exhibitors and for judges for 2025.

* We know that show committees will be working on their show schedules (books) soon so a thought to add a link for the judging standards book and if you are requesting an A.H.A. judge, these are the guidelines they follow.

* The A.H.A. is still offering a rosette ribbon for most points in the horticulture section and also there are six certificates available for different categories.

* Getting the shows schedule out into the community as soon as possible is a great way to ensure entries in the show. Local Farmers Markets and Garden Centers are a great place to advertise your upcoming bench show.



Fun Fact!

The winning pumpkin at the 2024 Smoky Lake Great White North Pumpkin Weigh off weighed 2137 pounds! That's 100lbs more than the 2023 winner!

Photo taken from the Smoky Lake Great White North Pumpkin Weigh-off Facebook Page

3 Essential Steps for Storing Winter Squash

The National Garden Bureau, in the US, designated 2024 as the Year of the Squash. Many of the tough-skinned winter squashes, pumpkins, and gourds will keep well for several months.

1. Be Careful When Harvesting.

Try not to damage the squash or its main stem as you harvest. Be sure to use scissors or pruners when cutting vines. Pulling can cause damage to the main stem, making it likely that the squash will rot. Cut the stem about 2.5 cm long. Any squash with blemishes or areas where the skin has broken is not suitable for long-term storage. Basically, you are looking for a squash that is completely encased in its skin, this will protect the inner flesh as it is stored for several weeks. It is important to note that frost will compromise the longevity of the squash. So, if you are planning on storing your squash for long periods of time, harvest before the first frost arrives.

2. Allow Time for Squash to "Cure".

All the curing process consists of is letting your squash rest for a period of 10 to 14 days in warm temperatures, preferably 24 to 27°C, with good air circulation. This releases some of the excess water contained in the mature fruit. This process results in a sweeter squash because, as the water leaves, the natural sugars in the squash concentrate. The outer layers will condense and harden, creating a protective layer for the now sweeter fruit within.

3. Store in Ideal Conditions.

Storing in a cool, dry place is imperative for keeping your squash last through the winter. Store squash at temperatures between 10 to 13°C and at about 70 to 75% humidity. Wipe down your squash to ensure the surface is rid of any moisture, and don't store on cold cement floors. Consider using wooden shelves to keep them off the ground. Discard any squash that show signs of decay as they may cause the others to follow. Avoid storing near ripening fruits, such as apples, since the ethylene gas produced by some fruits will shorten the longevity of your squash.

From www.trueleafmarket.com

Different varieties of squash vary in their life span. Here is an estimate of the examples I've mentioned:

Acorn: 4 weeks

Spaghetti: 4 to 5 weeks

Buttercup: 13 weeks

Butternut: 6 months

Blue Hubbard: 6 to 7 months

Connecticut Field Pumpkin: 2 to 3 months

Storing winter squash- including pumpkins, ...

Harvesting

Harvest winter squash when the fruit are fully mature. Mature winter squash have very hard skins that can't be punctured with the thumbnail. Additionally, mature winter squash have dull-looking surfaces.

When harvesting fruit, leave a 1-inch stem on winter squash. Cut with a knife. Fruit with no stem remaining will not store well. Be careful to not damage the skin.

When harvesting winter squash, handle them carefully to avoid cuts and bruises. These injuries are not only unsightly, they provide entrances for various rot-producing organisms. Cut the fruit off the vine with a pruning shears. Leave a 1 inch stem on each fruit.

Curing

After harvesting, cure winter squash (except for the acorn types) at a temperature of 80 to 85°F and a relative humidity of 80 to 85 percent. For a few days. Or 5-7 days Curing helps to harden the squash skins and heal any cuts and scratches. Do not cure acorn squash. The high temperature and relative humidity during the curing process actually reduce the quality and storage life of acorn squash. In an area with good air circulation.

Storing

After curing, store winter squash in a cool, dry, well-ventilated location. 50-70% RH Storage temperatures should be 50 to 55°F. 55-60 Store in a single layer Do not store squash near apples, pears, or other ripening fruit. Ripening fruit release ethylene gas which shortens the storage life of squash.

When properly cured and stored, the storage lives of acorn, butternut, and hubbard squash are approximately 5 to 8 weeks, 2 to 3 months, and 5 to 6 months, respectively.



3 Essential Steps for Storing Winter Squash Continued

Summer squash: Store fresh summer squash in the refrigerator crisper in plastic storage bags or rigid containers to retain moisture. Stored in this manner, squash will maintain quality for 5- 7 days. Summer squash can also be frozen or pickled for longer-term storage.

Iowa State University

<https://yardandgarden.extension.iastate.edu/faq/what-proper-way-harvest-and-store-winter-squash#:~:text=After%20curing%2C%20store%20winter%20squash,the%20storage%20life%20of%20squash>

-Can keep for weeks or months

-if your squash is a bit under-ripe, I've found you can bring them in the house and let them ripen and cure in a sunny spot.

For the best-quality squash, wait to harvest all types until they are mature—at least 50-55 days after the fruit has set (longer in cool climates).

Repeated exposure to temperatures below 50°F/10°C may cause chilling damage, reducing storage life.

According to Johnny's Selected Seeds, Some squash require time in storage after harvest for the best eating quality.

e.g. some Kabocha, buttercup, and hubbard are best after an additional; month of curing indoors.

<https://www.johnnyseeds.com/growers-library/vegetables/winter-squash/winter-squash-eating-guide.html>

Store up to 6 months- extending the garden harvest. Depending on the cultivar and conditions provided in storage, fruits should keep for up to six months.

Harvest before they are touched by frost (can use protection to extend the growing season)

-Allow the fruits to mature on the plant for as long as possible to accumulate the highest quantity of sugars from the leaves, but before frost arrives (frosted fruit will not store).

For best flavour

-When fruits develop a tough skin, ring hollow when lightly tapped, and have a deep, rich colour, they should be ripe

-Watch for signs of rot, and remove any affected fruit immediately.

-Lorraine Taylor

Vegreville Garden Club

The Vegreville Garden Club has been running a Bench Show for 43 years. As you can imagine, a lot has changed in 43 years. Categories like "Tame Fruits" now include fruits never grown before. Evans cherries, blueberries, watermelon, to name a few are included.

A Garden Club Bench Show Coordinator reviews the entry book on a yearly basis and makes updates and changes often suggested by AHA judges for that year.

Our Bench Show has evolved from a one day show to a five day show held in conjunction with the Vegreville Ag Society exhibition.

Exhibitors no longer have to fill out their own entry tags but must now fill out a form and pay \$1/entry.

Entries are entered by our Ag. Society office staff and tags are issued before the fair takes place. It is the responsibility of the exhibitors to make sure that they have met all of the requirements for their specific entry. They should consult the entry book for that purpose. Our entry book is available in the early Spring, on line or in print. We are fortunate to have two AHA judges come to Vegreville a day before the official fair begins. This year, two Garden Club members assisted each judge.

It is important to say that one Garden Club member volunteers to attend Exhibit Hall meetings. That member solicits all volunteers for the Bench Show which includes set up and decorating, entry take in, clean up and take down and coordinating with the Ag. Society office to review prize winners.

-Diana Ashton

Alberta Dahlia and Glad Society: Rumsey Recap

The Rumsey Red Deer River Garden Club had their 79th annual Garden Show on Aug 28, 2024. It is always on the last Wednesday of August.

Participation in this show, like many other garden shows, has been declining in the last few years. However, the Alberta Dahlia and Glad Society has committed to showing and judging and it is only one of the two sanctioned dahlia and glad shows in Alberta so it is important to us.

Our club members brought most (if not all) of the dahlias and glads, and some of the garden entries too.

Marilyn McArthur brought several vegetable entries and won many of the awards, her entries proved and showed what an awesome gardener she is. Lorne came with Marilyn this year and helped judge both dahlias and glads. Deb could not judge dahlias or glads because she is apprenticing as an Alberta Horticulture judge and she was judging the other categories. Shirley Cullum is usually combining (farming) but she was able to come with many entries. Terri-Lynn Dodd won most of the top awards for points including the 'King of the Show' with a perfect "Coralie". Shirley Cullum won the best glad spike with "Polar Bear". The Rumsey club provided us with lunch and then there was a wonderful supper following.

-Deb Hatt



Photos submitted by Deb Hatt

Camrose Rose & Lily Show

One hundred and eleven years is how long the Camrose & District Horticultural Society has actively existed in our community. There have been many changes and adaptations to activities and events. We used to host a complete horticultural show in conjunction with our local Ag Society's Fall Fair. Ours was just a small part of the event, along with baking, preserves, crafts and all types and varieties of farm animals, from bulls to rabbits. Times change and an event must adapt or fade away. The full Camrose Fall Fair disappeared about 25 years ago. Our club moved to a specialized bench show featuring roses and lilies and included flowers, art, photography and crafts. It, too, has gone through changes to survive. It's not a money maker - actually, it's a financial loss - but our club members accept this and work diligently to keep it going. The Rose City Rose & Lily Show and Tea has been an annual event in Camrose for over two decades.

Our success over the years is not just a result of our hard work, but also our unwavering commitment to continuous improvement. We believe in the power of teamwork, pre-planning, and clear job descriptions, and we've updated our Show Program to make the event more professional and inclusive. After each show, our members gather to evaluate our performance and identify areas for improvement, ensuring that we continue to grow and evolve.

The benchmark we use to measure the show's growth is the number of exhibitors. We increased from 18 in 2022 to 25 in 2023 and 30 in 2024. We utilize a variety of ways to reach potential exhibitors, including leaving a handwritten invitation in the mailbox where we see roses and lilies growing in the yard.

We're excited as we begin planning for the "2025 Rose City Rose & Lily Show and the Irene Sharkey Memorial Tea" (a new name to honour one of our long-time, dedicated volunteers). Our goal is to welcome 33 exhibitors, put on a terrific horticulturally themed display and interact with the community.

-Janine Carroll